



**The Pastoral Nominating Committee  
of Overbrook Presbyterian Church**

is pleased to introduce



**The Rev. Dr. Adam W. Hearlson**

Candidate for Designated Pastor

## **WHY WE CHOSE ADAM...**

**Powerful Preaching:** Adam is an exceptionally skilled preacher. His ability to weave everyday lessons with personal stories and historic facts brings Bible stories vividly to life, and is exactly what OPC needs to stay relevant in today's world. We truly felt a renewed vigor to live out the Gospel and make Overbrook a conduit for realizing the Kingdom of God.

**Communication Style:** Adam is brilliant, energetic and confident; equally impressive is his capacity for reflection on his own limitations and ability to draw people out by asking the right questions. Despite his professional accomplishments, he is humble and accommodating, a true bridge-builder.

**Dedication to Diversity:** Adam is passionate about issues related to race, poverty, food justice, ecology, housing, and gun violence. He honors all types of diversity and has a great desire for the church to address social justice issues among neighbors near and far.

**Vision for OPC:** Adam wants to help, support, and guide us toward God's will for Overbrook. His energy and confidence are contagious, and we can't wait to see him engage with and be part of the future spiritual journey of our church family!

**Interpersonal Collaboration:** Adam recognizes and taps into the blessings of those around him to accomplish the greater good. He is deeply attentive to the individuals in his presence: getting to know them; listening to their thoughts, concerns, and ideas with great empathy; and encouraging even the most private individuals to open up and share their talents.

Overall, the PNC has been inspired, intellectually stimulated, and emotionally moved by Adam's sermons, conversations, and good-humored nature. We left our encounters with Adam wanting to be better Christians, and are tremendously excited to welcome him to OPC!

Sisters and brothers in Christ at Overbrook:

We are delighted to introduce to you the Rev. Dr. Adam Wayne Hearlson, unanimously chosen by your Pastoral Nominating Committee as the candidate to be our Designated Pastor. For the most part this document will refer to him as “Adam,” as you will too, once you have met him.

With the assistance of Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry, and with what we hope and believe to be the grace of God, we reached a swift conclusion about the right person to lead our congregation on the next leg of its journey.

The Co-Chairs of our Committee have borne a very large fraction of the burden of this process, so I gladly take this opportunity to acknowledge the organization, the attention to detail, the clarity of communication, and the soundness of judgment of Andrea Gosfield and Robert Harden. Also deserving the warm thanks of the PNC and of Overbrook at large is our paraclete from the Presbytery COM, Jim Ballengee, who provided continuous guidance in matters large and small and answered countless queries.

The call of a pastor is necessarily a beginning for any congregation, but your PNC believes that God is about to do something new at Overbrook. Adam brings extraordinary gifts, and Overbrook is an extraordinary congregation. He is coming among us to “equip the saints for the work of ministry,” but we can and must equip, support, and encourage him as well, so that together we may do God’s work here at the Crossroads and far beyond.

Please open your hearts to Adam and his family.

Joseph Piatt, for the PNC:

Andrea Gosfield and Robert Harden, Co-Chairs,  
Margene Biedermann, Cheryl Davis, Jason Duckworth,  
Suchita Fiorillo, Aimerie Scherluebbe, and Jill Van Rawley

Dear Overbrook Presbyterian Church,

Grace and Peace! My name is Adam Hearlson and I am honored to be invited to join you all in ministry and service at Overbrook Presbyterian Church.

Originally from California, I have lived on the east coast for nearly fifteen years. My family recently moved to the area when my wife Christy joined the theological faculty at Villanova. Our relocation opened up exciting vocational possibilities as I discerned my work. Truthfully, my

wife and I knew about OPC before it knew about us. Our friends in local churches and at the Presbytery frequently remarked that Overbrook Presbyterian Church was doing some of the most inspiring ministry in Philadelphia. In my own moments of vocational day dreaming, I would think, "I like what they are doing over there, I wonder..." I was therefore delighted when I was asked to apply to be your pastor.

After many discussions with the Pastoral Nominating Committee, prayerful discernment, and conversations with my family and friends, I believe that God is calling me to serve alongside you at OPC. Your church is a unique place. Your diversity, passion for service, and joyful community are exciting and attractive strengths. I am additionally inspired by your commitment to justice and mission. Long before I ever applied to this position, I was impressed by your social witness when I saw shirts erected across the church property to raise awareness of gun violence in Philadelphia. By the end of my own discernment, I was confident that I knew of no other church better situated to meet the challenges of the future. I feel a palpable sense that God is using OPC to bless its neighborhood and the world. I feel privileged to have the chance to work together with you as we seek that blessing.

In preparation for our coming work, know that you have been central to my prayer life. I also covet your prayers. Pray for my family as they transition into a new community. Pray for me as I try and remember everyone's name, and continue to pray that God's



vision for OPC will be made clear to us in the common course of our service.

My Brazilian friend always used to say to me, “You don’t know someone until you share a kilo of salt with them.” That is, you have to eat a lot of dinners with someone before you truly know them. I have been told that you are a congregation that loves to eat (The Taste of Overbrook sounds delicious!). I too love food and I am eager to sit at the table with you where we can share our stories, our laughter, our grief, and our dreams. I trust that these meals will seed a ministry that we will harvest together in the coming years.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Hearlson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Adam Hearlson



*I am blessed to be married to Christy Lang Hearlson. Christy is a professor of theology at Villanova University and also a Presbyterian minister. We live in Bryn Mawr with our two boys Elliot (5) and Eamon (1). In my spare time, I enjoy cooking, spending time in my garden, and watching basketball.*

## **Adam Hearlson's Statement of Faith**

I first met God in stories. In the stories of creation, God created a well-ordered world but still wasn't troubled by a little chaos. In the lives of the Israelites, I heard the story of God who releases God's people from bondage and leads them home. In the oracles of the prophets, I learned of a God who longs for justice but is quick with mercy. In the lives of the saints of my church, I saw a God who is faithful even amid the most dire circumstances. In person of Jesus Christ, I continually meet the God who is interested in my story, and who wants me to be part of the divine story—a story that connects me to God's people through the ages, and to God's mission in the world.

God is a Trinity whose members are coequal and engaged in an unbroken fellowship of love. God's character and promise is revealed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate one and second person of the Trinity. Christ is the primary and most important lens by which we understand both God the creator and God the Spirit. Christ carries the torch that illumines the rest of my theology. I believe that the historical rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth was both fully divine and fully human, without separation or division. The mystery of this divine union remains both a central pillar of the faith and one of its great mysteries.

The God I meet in Christ is committed to grace and redemption. In Christ, God has boldly declared that the world will not always be as it is now, but will be transformed into a place where the hungry are fed, the grieving are comforted, the enslaved are liberated, the broken are made whole again, and creation restored. I believe this promise and commit my life to seeing it made true. I believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ demonstrates divine solidarity with us in our human suffering, kindles hope within our hearts, and directs our purpose in the world.

The Holy Spirit is, according to the Nicene Creed, the "life-giver" and is responsible for sowing new life in the world both inside and outside of the church. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the continuation of Christ's work in the world. The Spirit re-presents the redeeming work of Christ to each generation. The Spirit is also our Comforter and Advocate, ministering to our needs. Christians are called to follow the Spirit as it creates new life, forms new

community, comforts the afflicted, and advocates for the oppressed. The church is formed by this triune God, whose very being encompasses both otherness and unity. The Trinity lives in a dance of internal mutuality (or to use my favorite fancy theological term: a perichoretic union) and is always moving outward in mission to the world. The church, the Body of Christ, fulfills its purpose when, like God, it seeks internal loving fellowship among its members and moves outward into the world, extending grace and seeking justice. Christ has given to the church the gifts of baptism and communion as means by which we experience loving fellowship with God and each other, and by which we are nourished for our work in the world.

Formed by a God who exists in oneness and difference, the church should not fear difference. Among its own members and between its various historic expressions, the church should seek unity amid difference. When faithful to God's mission in the world, the church refuses the temptation to remove itself from society and commits to relationships with neighbors who look, act, sound, and believe differently.

Holy Scripture is a trustworthy witness to the revelation of God in the life of Israel and in Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the scriptures are an authoritative human testimony to God's power, grace, love and justice. They are given to the world to be studied, used, spoken aloud, shared in community, and meditated upon for the upbuilding of the church and the formation of disciples. The scriptures are an overflowing cup which never runs dry. All of the sermons the world has ever heard, all of the commentaries ever written, and every bible study ever conducted have not exhausted the wisdom of the scriptures.

The God who made the whole created world also made our human bodies and called them good. Bodies—all people's bodies—matter to God. In Christ's resurrection, which is the first fruit of our own resurrection, we are promised that death is not the end. Our lives, our bodies, and our stories are precious to God. I believe that sometime, God knows when, Christ will return in power to usher in a world of perpetual love and mercy. I believe, in the end, we will see God and all will be well as we join in communion and song.

# **ADAM HEARLSON AT A GLANCE...**

## **Personal Background**

- Born & raised in Newport Beach, California
- Married to Rev. Dr. Christy Lang Hearlson
- Children: Elliot (5) and Eamon (1)

## **Formal Education**

- Princeton Theological Seminary, Ph.D. in Practical Theology, emphasis in Homiletics (2013)
- Princeton Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity (2008)
- Vanguard University, Bachelor of Arts (2005)  
Religious Studies *Magna Cum Laude*

## **Ministry**

- Interim Associate of Education, Fellowship, & Discipleship, Wayne Presbyterian Church, Wayne, PA (2018-present)
- Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship & Director of Wilson Chapel, Andover Newton Theological School (2013-2018)
- Preaching Pastor, Trinity United Church, Warren, NJ (2010-2013)
- Pastor of Youth and Family Ministries, Grace Fellowship Church, Costa Mesa, CA (2002-2005)
- Ordination: United Church of Christ, New Jersey Association (2013)

## **Leadership in the Wider Church**

- Book: *The Holy No: Worship as a Subversive Act*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018)
- *The Christian Century*, Contributing Editor
- "Technicolor Jesus" Co-host  
Podcast on movies, preaching & ministry
- Provides workshops and lectures nationally, on a variety of Christian topics